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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on findings from a survey of teacher education faculty and students soliciting opinions on the effectiveness of foundations courses in the teacher education curriculum. The survey population was drawn from member institutions of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Perceptions were sought on: (1) the quality of the education program; (2) the academic ability of students; (3) the adequacy of preparation for entry-level teaching; (4) the adequacy of preparation for core teaching functions; (5) the appropriateness of preparation for teaching in culturally diverse classes; (6) the general rigor of education courses compared to other college courses; and (7) the importance students and faculty assign to foundations study for teacher preparation. A brief analysis of the findings is presented in a summary of the paper. Two tables are included: opinions on prospective teachers' ability to teach in core functions, and opinions on the extent to which study in educational foundations has contributed to students' understanding and attitudes. (JD)

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AACTE RATE PROJECT
A NATIONAL STUDY OF TEACHER PREPARATION

YEAR TWO: FOUNDATIONS COURSES

Preliminary Findings from the Program Data

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A paper presented at the 1988 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, April, 1988

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Indices of Program Quality

Both faculty and students perceive their programs positively. Almost seventy percent (69.5%) of the foundations faculty who were surveyed rated the teacher education programs with which they are affiliated with as good or excellent; the great majority of the remaining respondents assessed them as average (22.5%). There are differences across strata. Four of five (81.4%) of the respondents in bachelors institutions perceived their programs as better than average; almost as many in the masters plus institutions (75%) concur but only 56.7 percent of those in Ph.D. granting institutions rated their programs similarly. These findings are very similar to the perceptions of the secondary methods professors who were surveyed the previous year both across strata and in terms of difference between strata.

Correspondingly these faculty respondents rated the teacher candidates at their institutions as better prepared academically than prospective teachers at other institutions. A little over 60 percent (61.1%) viewed them as better prepared and another two thirds (32.9%) as similarly prepared. Again bachelors level teacher education faculty were more positive than faculty in the other two strata and responses were similar to those faculty responses of the prior year.

The foundations faculty were also asked how adequately prepared they believed their teacher preparation graduates were to teach effectively as entry-level teachers. Students enrolled in their courses were asked this question as well. Again, the responses from both parties were overwhelmingly positive. Seventy percent of the faculty and an almost identical percentage of students (69.7%) assessed their preparation as good

or outstanding. The great majority of the remaining faculty and students assessed their preparation as adequate. Again there were differences across strata with a little over 85 percent (85.4%) of masters plus institutions faculty viewing their students preparation as better than average and about 75 percent (76.8) of the bachelors, and 50 percent (51.6%) of the Ph.D. granting institutions faculty reporting similarly. Students' ratings were similarly positive. However students at Masters plus institutions were not as positive as their faculty (74.6%) and students at the Ph.D. granting institutions more positive (62.8%) than the faculty.

The responses were more cautious when faculty and students were asked whether these teacher education graduates are prepared to teach in a culturally diverse setting or with 'at-risk' students. Almost 30 percent of the faculty (29.7%) and a similar number of students (28.6%) indicated that they were less than adequately prepared. Responses were relatively evenly distributed across the five point scale indicating considerable variability both within and across institutional strata.

Perceptions of competence were also tempered when more specificity in terms of desired understandings and abilities was assessed by faculty and students. Table 1 illustrates this.

Insert Table 1 Here

As can be seen from this table, both faculty and students were queried in terms of how well they perceived the students to be prepared relative to such core teaching functions as general teaching methods, classroom

management, selection of instructional materials, teaching with computers, and understanding and responding to student differences. As can be seen faculty consistently assessed students in their teacher preparation programs as adequately prepared 30 to 40 percent of the time. The greatest number of respondents assessed their students as being prepared at the fourth and fifth points on the five point scale, or as better than average. The percentage of respondents who assessed their students as less than prepared ranges typically from 10 to 20 percent with the exception of the ability to teach with computers and deal with misbehavior in the classroom, which are closer to 40 percent.

It is here, however, where the student responses are especially informative. Whereas only 10 to 20 percent of the faculty assessed the students as less than adequately prepared, from 30 to 50 percent of the students reported that they are less than well prepared in these various understandings and abilities. In the instance of being adequately prepared to teach with computers, the number who reported this to be a problem rose to over 75 percent (76.7%). Thus while with the exception of teaching with computers, the majority of students either see themselves as prepared or well prepared in these various teaching functions, there is nonetheless a very considerable minority who report that they are not adequately prepared to teach in terms of these core responsibilities. It should be underscored, however, that the education student respondents were typically in their junior years.

Both faculty and students were asked to assess the general rigor of education courses in the professional sequence compared to courses students enrolled in outside the school, college or department of education. Faculty

and student responses were very similar with only a small minority (15.4% of faculty, 13.4% of students) reporting that the education courses were less rigorous than most other non-education courses. About 40 percent of the faculty (40.7%) and 34 percent of the students viewed the education courses about as rigorous as most other courses they had taken and over a third of the faculty and students reported the courses in education as more rigorous with slightly more students (36.9%) than faculty (34.0%) indicating this to be the situation. There were some differences across strata with a larger percentage of those in the baccalaureate only institutions reporting their education courses to be more rigorous than non-education courses. This was true for both faculty and students.

Just as perceptions of student ability were tempered somewhat when more specificity was introduced into the item, perceptions of rigor were similarly altered when faculty and students were asked to estimate the intellectual rigor that the foundation course presented to the student in comparison to <u>specific</u> courses which students pursued at the same academic level. The courses with which the foundations course was contrasted included: English, History, Foreign Languages, Science, and Mathematics. A little more than 90 percent of the faculty rated their course as rigorous or more rigorous than the course in English. About 80 percent (81.1%) rated the course as rigorous or more rigorous as a course in history. The percentages fell off sharply for foreign languages, science and mathematics, where the percentage of faculty assessing the course about the same or more rigorous descended from 62 percent to 52.5 percent to 52.3 percent. Student comparisons were not as positive. About two-thirds of the students rated their foundations course to be about as intellectually rigorous, however

that term was interpreted by them, as English and history. About four and ten rated it as comparable to a course in science in math and only 30.1 percent comparable or more rigorus as a course in foreign language. Thus, the majority of students reported coursework in the latter three areas as more rigorous than the foundations course. It should also be noted that slightly more than 40 percent of the students reported that they had no basis for comparison with the foreign language course and almost 20 percent of the faculty indicated the same. One could conclude from this a fundamental lack of engagement with a second language by a considerable number of students and faculty. It should also be noted that these data are quite similar to last year's data in terms of both faculty and student responses.

There is little doubt that both faculty and students view education courses as more time consuming generally than non-education courses. This may well be because of the numerous field based assignments attached to many courses. Over 80 percent of faculty and students view education courses as more time consuming. Once again, the pattern is for faculty in strata 1, the bachelor's institutions, to see their preparation as more demanding than faculty in other strata. For example, over two-thirds (66.8%) of the faculty in bachelor's institutions report that their courses are more time consuming, whereas only 30 percent (30.5%) of the faculty in Ph.D. granting institutions perceive this to be the situation.

Given the pervasive concern over the character and quality of general studies and the relationship of this coursework to professional studies in education, selected items in this second year of data collection addressed concerns about the Arts, Sciences and Humanities. Students and faculty were

asked how important they believed general studies were in the education of a teacher. Over 85 percent of the faculty responded that general studies were important to extremely important in a prospective teacher's education. Surprisingly an even high percentage of students (94.1%) responded similarly. We were somewhat puzzled, especially by the enthusiastic support of students as this contradicts the perceptions of many students whom we interviewed in the case studies conducted to accompany this survey study.

Students were also asked to assess the quality of the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities courses which they had taken to this point in their program. Slightly more than 40 percent (40.6%) assessed the quality of these courses as adequate and over 50 percent (51.3%) rated these courses as very good or outstanding. Less than one-in-ten saw the general quality of these courses as inadequate. There were no basic differences across strata with students in the Ph.D. granting institutions assessing the quality of their general studies almost as high as those in baccalaureate only institutions. Again these data raise questions, especially in light of the pervasive concern about the quality of general studies across the country.

The position taken by a number of advocates for substantial change or reform in teacher preparation is that it is not possible for a prospective teacher to acquire a well rounded liberal education and adequate professional preparation within a four year program of undergraduate study. Thus we posed this question to faculty and students. Students and faculty alike responded that generally there are problems in this regard. Only about a fourth of the faculty (25.3%) and students (22.2%) indicated that this dual mission was not difficult. Slightly more than a third of the faculty (35.3%) and considerably more of the students (44.6%) perceive this

to be somewhat difficult. And another 30 to almost 40 percent of the faculty reported it to be extremely difficult to do both. Not surprisingly there were strata differences here, with 40.5 percent of the baccalaureate faculty, only 26.9 percent of the masters plus faculty and almost 50 percent (48.3%) of those at Ph.D. granting institutions reporting it difficult to get a well rounded education and to be prepared as a teacher in four years. More students than faculty in the baccalaureate institutions and in the masters plus institutions reported this as quite difficult but fewer students than faculty in the Ph.D. institutions reported this to be the situation. Further probing into the differences in perception especially between faculty and students is called for here.

In a similar vein, faculty were asked whether they believed there was enough time allotted within their teacher preparation program for students to achieve the level of knowledge and skill they believe to be appropriate for a beginning teacher. Interestingly only about a fourth of the faculty reported that there was inadequate time within the professional preparation program to prepare a teacher and almost an identical percentage suggested there was more than enough time to adequately prepare students. Thus we have considerable variability in terms of perceptions of adequate "life space" in teacher preparation programs. Again, there were strata differences ranging from about 20 percent of the faculty in bachelor's institutions who believed there was not enough time to almost a third of the faculty in Ph.D. institutions who perceived a problem in this regard. The somewhat contradictory responses here in terms of the previous question concerned with time for a well rounded education and teacher preparation also warrant further investigation. One plausible interpretation is that

the professional programs are perceived by many as cutting more deeply than desirable into the curriculum which should be devoted to general studies.

The professors in the foundations area were asked as well whether the teacher preparation programs with which they were affiliated allowed sufficient time to achieve the level of knowledge and understanding of educational foundations that they believed to be appropriate for a beginning teacher. Understandably perhaps, a higher percentage of faculty reported inadequate time here with almost 40 percent (39.9%) of the faculty across strata indicating this to be a problem. Strata differences were apparent with well over half of the faculty in Ph.D. granting institutions (55.8%) reporting a problem in this regard, but only about one in five (22.4%) of those in masters plus institutions perceiving this to be the situation.

II. Perceptions of the Nature and Character of the Foundations Component

In addition to soliciting student and faculty perceptions about the nature and quality of their overall professional studies, this second year of the RATE study focused specifically on the foundations component of professional education studies. As reported above, the perceived rigor of foundations was assessed by asking students and faculty to compare these courses with selected non-education courses. Again, students perceived these courses to be as or more rigorous than courses in English and history, but slightly less rigorous than courses in science and mathematics, and considerably less rigorous than coursework in foreign languages.

We also asked the students and faculty about the general quality of foundations study. In general terms, the quality of foundations study was assessed as very adequate. Over 90 percent of the faculty rated the

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and religion. The discipline reported
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and history. Core disciplines which w
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As in the first round of the RATE data collection we were interested in the extent to which different general pedagogical methods were employed in courses within professional education studies. The specific types of methods were modified somewhat to reflect foundations courses in the second year and socratic dialogue and logical analysis of concepts were added to the previous year's list of methods. The results of this inquiry were about what one would expect. Lecture and group discussion remain the staples of college teaching, or at least they are reported as being employed more frequently by more respondents than other methods. However, almost half of the foundations faculty report engaging in the logical analysis of concepts frequently and over 40 percent indicate a similar use of socratic dialogue. Peer or microteaching and field trips appear to be relatively rarely employed in foundations courses, and the use of computers is almost non-existent. There was considerable correspondence between the perceptions of students enrolled in the courses and the faculty who taught them. One exception was that considerably fewer students indicated regular involvement in socratic dialogue, however they might have defined that term, than faculty.

As in the first round of the RATE data collection an attempt was made to examine the out-of-class activities of students associated with study in various education courses. The out-of-class activities reported for foundations courses do not vary significantly from those reported as associated with secondary methods classes. For example, foundations faculty report that they typically expect about six hours of work per week out-of-class and students correspondingly report that this is approximately the amount of time they give to these courses. Faculty were asked how often

they reviewed research in their course and 31 percent (31.5%) of the faculty reported that they do this occasionally, and well over half (56.3%) indicated that this is a frequent activity. Students' perceptions do not corroborate faculty views in this regard. Almost a third of the students reported occasional engagement with research studies, but only about a third, as opposed to over half of the faculty, indicated that they frequently engage in this as part of their studies in foundations. Again about a quarter of the faculty indicated that they occasionally require library assignments, where students are asked to engage in various forms of research. Almost 60 percent of the faculty overall and almost 70 percent of the faculty in the bachelor's granting institutions reported that they frequently require library research. Once again, student responses varied somewhat from those of the faculty. While about a quarter of the students reported that this is an occasional activity, only about 40 percent of the students reported that they frequently engage in library research. Disturbingly, a little more than a third of the student respondents suggested that they rarely, if ever, either review research as part of their course content or engage in library activity.

Finally, we asked how many office hours faculty typically posted per week. Responses ranged from about 7 and one-half a week in Ph.D. granting institutions to almost 11 hours per week in the masters plus institutions. Faculty in the bachelor's granting institutions reported almost 10 hours per week. Regardless of these strata differences students across strata overwhelmingly reported that faculty are nearly always accessible with over three-fourths of the students reporting this to be the situation. Almost 85 percent of the students in the bachelor's institutions indicated this to be

the case, but over 70 percent of the students in the larger Ph.D. granting institution also reported this as well. Regardless of this prevalent perception of faculty accessibility, the considerable majority of students reported that they rarely receive major assistance from professors. Over 60 percent of the students across strata indicated that they rarely or never receive help from their professors and only one in seven indicated that they frequently receive help. One is not sure how to interpret these data which suggest considerable accessibility on the one hand and yet a limited number of students receiving much help on the other, except to infer that by and large students either do not need much out-of-class assistance, or they don't pursue it for other reasons, such as their busy social and work lives.

Summary

The results of the second round of RATE data collection confirm that the majority of findings reported in round 1 hold up when faculty from another area of teacher preparation and students enrolled in their courses are surveyed. The general quality of programs is seen as quite high. Faculty appear especially positive about teacher education in their own institution vis-a-vis what they perceive to be happening in other institutions. Thus, one could both infer considerable pride by faculty in their own programs and concern about teacher education generally. However, when the extent to which specific abilities and attitudes desired in beginning teachers are assessed as achieved, the portrayal is more uneven in terms of quality. While a substantial number of both students and faculty report adequate or better than adequate preparation relative to a number of core teaching functions and fundamentals understandings, there is nonetheless a sizeable

minority in almost every instance who report that they are not adequately prepared in these core functions or have not achieved necessary understandings to teach. The number of teachers who report that they are adequately prepared to teach when the context is one of a multicultural setting or a classroom comprised with 'at risk' children drops considerably as well.

Thus, while faculty and students are generally positive about many aspects of their initial preparation, it is apparent that there is considerable variability within and across strata, and we suspect within and across institutions as well. While there is understandable variability in terms of opinions about whether or not there is adequate time for the preparation of teachers within a four year undergraduate program, it is apparent that a considerable number of faculty and students believe that it is very difficult to acquire both a quality liberal education and professional preparation for teaching at the same time. A number of factors come in to play here in terms of differences in organizational structures and relationships and integration between professional studies and general studies. Faculty generally do not share a similar concern about the lack of time for students to engage in their professional studies, and while it is not clear why this is the case, it suggests that professional studies in some instances at least have been gained at the expense of general studies.

Perhaps most surprising about this second phase of data collection is how highly valued study in the arts, sciences and humanities is by faculty and students alike and how highly they rate the quality of that coursework. Similarly the endorsements of the value and the estimates of the quality of

foundational study surprised us. While this is a very positive picture, obviously more study into the nature and character of both general studies and foundational study and their actual effects on students is needed.

While there are many positive factors suggested by these data in terms of the rigor and quality of education courses and general studies, the diversity of teaching methods employed by faculty, and their accessibility to students, concerns and problems are apparent as well. Both the quality of instruction and the time to prepare adequately for the difficult role of teaching is a problem for many. The ability to use modern technology or employ a second language lag far behind what is known and needed. Beyond this we know little about what standards were employed and which conceptions of good teaching are for those who provided these assessments for us. The data do suggest that better preparation than many believe to be the situation exists. They also point the way to problem areas and to where further study is badly needed.

TABLE 1
PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' ABILITY TO TEACH
IN CORE FUNCTIONS

CATEGORY	PROFESSORS' PERCEPTIONS			EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS*		
	less than prepared	prepared	more than prepared	less than prepared	prepared	more than prepared
teaching methods	10.1	30.7	59.2	36.6	29.5	33.9
classroom management	21.9	42.3	35.8	41.0	33.4	25.6
instructional planning	10.9	32.2	56.9	36.3	30.1	33.6
dealing with misbehavior	27.0	40.9	32.1	47.6	29.7	22.7
curriculum development	36.5	37.1	26.4	45.2	31.5	23.4
materials development	18.3	41.3	40.4	39.1	31.5	29.4
selection/use of instructional material	13.7	45.3	41.0	41.9	29.2	28.9
teaching with computers	39.3	42.8	17.9	76.7	19.5	8.8
understanding aid	23.2	28.2	48.6	24.2	35.1	40.7
working effectively with colleagues	20.0	32.9	47.1	36.4	30.1	35.5
diagnosing needs	18.8	38.1	43.1	36.0	32.9	31.1
evaluating student learning	16.4	46.4	37.2	31.9	30.1	38.0

*It should be noted that on the average the education students enrolled in the foundations courses and responding to the survey were early to mid-juniors in terms of credits completed and thus in many instances relatively early in their education studies.

TABLE 2
THE EXTENT TO WHICH STUDY IN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
HAS CONTRIBUTED TO STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS AND ATTITUDES

CATEGORY	FACULTY PERCEPTIONS			EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS		
	Little	Somewhat	Considerable	Little	Somewhat	Considerable
increased sensitivity to moral and ethical effects of teaching	3.3	36.8	59.9	10.7	31.6	57.7
increased sensitivity to the role of schools in addressing social inequities	8.6	36.8	54.9	9.7	33.5	56.8
broadened understanding of individual and cultural differences	5.3	25.8	68.9	11.8	30.6	57.6
broadened understanding of alternative approaches to teaching and schooling	12.5	40.1	47.4	14.1	25.9	60.0
broadened understanding of legal, political, and economic dimensions of scnooling	11.2	28.5	60.3	16.0	30.5	53.5
assisted in clarifying beliefs about teaching	4.6	29.6	65.8	12.3	30.2	57.5
broadened understanding of how one comes to know	17.1	36.8	36.1	18.4	35.0	46.6
provided historical perspective for better understanding of current educational policy and practice	5.9	36.4	57.7	13.1	29.1	57.8